

BLOOD ON THE TRACKS

A CHIEF INSPECTOR HENRIK MALMSTRÖM STORY

THANOS KALAMIDAS





An Ovi Magazine Books Publication

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The 9:18 p.m. Kristianstad to Hässleholm train was running late, as usual. The rain smeared against the carriage windows, turning the outside world into a blur of orange streetlights and the occasional flicker of a station sign. The ticket inspector, a middle-aged man named Stefan Berg, was weary after a long shift. He had already dealt with three drunk students, a broken vending machine dispute, and an old woman convinced that her cat, long deceased, was still hiding somewhere in the train's ventilation system.

He moved through the carriages methodically, checking for stragglers. Most of the passengers had disembarked at Kristianstad, leaving the train almost

deserted. As he reached the last compartment, his eye caught an unclaimed suitcase on the overhead luggage rack.

Standard protocol. Forgotten bags usually meant someone would come running back, breathless and apologetic. He tapped it with his knuckle. Heavy. Too heavy for a weekend bag.

Berg sighed and pulled it down. The worn leather was cool under his fingers. No name tag, no airline sticker. He hesitated before flipping the latches. The moment he lifted the lid, he felt his stomach clench.

Inside, neat stacks of 500-kronor bills were lined up like a banker's dream, except for the dark brown stains soaking the edges. Blood.

Berg swallowed hard and looked around. The carriage was empty. The train rattled on through the night, oblivious. His fingers trembled as he reached for his radio.

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By the time the Malmö police were alerted, the suitcase was already locked in a security office at Kristianstad Central Station. Two uniformed officers

stood watch over it, waiting for the real detectives to arrive.

At 10:42 p.m., Chief Inspector Henrik Malmström pulled up outside the station, the Volvo's headlights slicing through the rain. He cut the engine and sighed.

"Blood-stained money on a train," he muttered, rubbing his face. "What next? A head in a locker?"

Beside him, Jonna Eriksson, his second-in-command, checked her notes. "No reports of violence on the train, no witnesses coming forward. The suitcase was just... there."

Malmström opened his door, the cold October drizzle tapping against his coat. "Things like this don't just appear out of nowhere, Jonna. Someone put it there. And someone is going to come looking for it."

They stepped inside the station, where the night staff looked half asleep. The security guard, a pasty man with tired eyes, led them to a back office where the suitcase sat ominously on the desk.

Malmström folded his arms. "Alright, let's take a look."

The moment the lid lifted, he whistled low. "Well, that's a hell of a withdrawal."

Jonna leaned in. "Too much for a casual gambler. Too messy for a bank job. Someone wanted this moved, but something went wrong."

Malmström glanced at her. "And what happens when money goes missing?"

She didn't need to answer.

A crackle from his radio interrupted them. Malmström lifted it. "Go ahead."

The dispatch officer sounded tense. *"Inspector, we've got something else. A body's just been found in Kristianstad's train yard. Male, mid-forties. Single gunshot wound to the head."*

Malmström snapped the suitcase shut. "Right. Let's go."

Jonna grabbed her coat. "You think it's connected?"

He gave her a sideways look. "Jonna, when was the last time you saw a suitcase full of blood money turn up the same night someone got executed?"

She nodded grimly. "I'll drive."

Outside, the rain fell harder, washing the station platform clean. But no amount of rain could wash away the smell of blood and bad money.



The body in the yard

The train yard was a miserable place at the best of times, and this wasn't the best of times. The October rain had turned the gravel into thick puddles of blackened sludge, the rusting freight cars casting long shadows under the flickering halogen lights. The hum of the city felt distant here, muffled by the rain and the sheer emptiness of the place.

Chief Inspector Henrik Malmström pulled his coat tighter against the cold, hands deep in his pockets. He'd been standing there for ten minutes, watching the forensics team work, watching the way the scene played out like a grim tableau.

A man lay face-down between the tracks, motionless except for the rain pooling in the folds of his jacket. A single bullet hole in the back of the head, textbook execution. No sign of a struggle. No footprints leading up to him. The killer had known exactly what they were doing.

Jonna Eriksson crouched next to the body, her blonde hair tucked into the hood of her raincoat. "They didn't even try to hide him," she said.

Malmström exhaled through his nose. "Means one of two things: either they wanted him found, or they didn't have time to move him." He glanced up at the industrial floodlights, their glow struggling against the fog rolling in. "Any witnesses?"

Jonna shook her head. "Nothing yet. Yard's mostly empty at night except for a skeleton crew. Dispatcher on duty swears he didn't hear a thing."

Malmström looked over at Erik Lindqvist, the forensics specialist, who was snapping photos of the wound. The man had the meticulous air of a surgeon, always calm, always methodical. He glanced up.

"Nine-millimeter round, close-range, silencer most likely," Lindqvist said. "Single shot, execution-style.

He never saw it coming.” He straightened and gestured to the pool of blood under the body. “Shot was recent. Less than two hours ago.”

Malmström nodded, chewing the inside of his cheek. “Just about the time someone left a suitcase full of bloody money on a train.”

Jonna frowned. “You think it’s connected?”

Malmström crouched next to the body, reaching into the man’s coat. A leather wallet, damp from the rain, slid into his hand. He flipped it open, scanning the ID.

“Patrik Sundqvist.” He turned the card toward Jonna. “Name ring a bell?”

She nodded. “Yeah. Bookmaker. Small-time. Ran with the poker circuit in Malmö. Nothing major, just the usual underground games.”

Malmström flicked through the wallet’s contents. A few hundred kronor. A couple of receipts. And a crumpled train ticket.

He smoothed it out, reading the faded ink. Hässleholm to Kristianstad. Tonight. Timestamped 9:15 p.m.

“Well,” he muttered, “looks like our boy took a ride before someone punched his last ticket.”

Jonna exhaled. “You thinking robbery?”

Malmström shook his head. “Not with a shot like that. This wasn’t a mugging, this was a message. Question is, who was it meant for?”

* * * * *

They left Lindqvist to finish his work and walked back toward the police car, boots crunching over the gravel. The air smelled of wet iron, old oil, and something worse, the kind of scent that clung to crime scenes.

Jonna flipped through her notes. “If Sundqvist was carrying money, it’s gone now.”

Malmström lit a cigarette, shielding it from the rain with his hand. He took a drag, letting the smoke mix with the cold night air. “Maybe he was never carrying it,” he said.

She frowned. “Then where does the suitcase come in?”

“Maybe he was meant to pick it up. Maybe he was meant to deliver it. Either way, someone didn’t like the way things were going.”

Jonna stared back toward the body. “So what’s next?”

Malmström flicked his cigarette away and watched the red ember hiss in a puddle. “We follow the money.”

He pulled his coat tighter and stepped into the car. The rain drummed against the roof, steady and unrelenting.

This wasn’t over.

It was just beginning.



A dangerous bet

The rain had turned Malmö's backstreets into slick ribbons of asphalt, the neon glow from cheap bars reflecting off puddles like broken glass. Chief Inspector Henrik Malmström guided the Volvo through the winding roads, fingers drumming against the steering wheel. Beside him, Jonna Eriksson was reading through her notes, her blonde hair tucked behind her ear.

"Patrik Sundqvist wasn't a nobody," she said. "He was a bookmaker, yes, but he had connections. The kind of people you don't want to owe money to."

Malmström grunted. "And yet, someone made sure he didn't pay them back."

Jonna looked up from her notes. “You really think this all comes down to gambling?”

He turned onto a dimly lit road leading toward Malmö’s old industrial district. “Gambling, debt, and blood usually go hand in hand.”

Their destination loomed ahead, a club tucked between an abandoned warehouse and a laundromat that never seemed to have customers. The sign above the entrance read The Black Ace, its faded paint barely visible under a flickering red light.

Malmström parked the car and took a final drag from his cigarette before flicking it into the gutter. “Ready?”

Jonna checked her gun. “Always.”

They pushed through the heavy wooden door, the smell of stale smoke and cheap cologne hitting them like a wall. Inside, men hunched over poker tables, whispers of bets exchanged under the hum of bad jazz music.

At the far end of the room, behind a polished mahogany desk, Kasper Holst sat like a king surveying his domain. He was a man in his late forties, hair

slicked back, dressed in an expensive suit that didn't quite hide his past life in prison. He was sipping a whiskey, a bemused smile playing on his lips as Malmström and Jonna approached.

"Well, well," Holst drawled, setting his glass down. "To what do I owe the pleasure, Chief Inspector?"

Malmström pulled up a chair without asking. "Patrik Sundqvist."

Holst's smirk didn't falter, but there was a brief flicker of something in his eyes.

"Dead, isn't he?" Holst swirled his drink. "Terrible business. He owed the wrong people a lot of money."

Jonna leaned in. "Who exactly?"

Holst chuckled. "If I gave you a list of everyone Patrik owed, we'd be here all night."

Malmström placed a photo of the bloodstained suitcase on the table. "Maybe this shortens the list."

Holst froze for just a second, a fraction of hesitation before he leaned back in his chair. "Never seen it before."

Malmström wasn't buying it. "That's funny. Because we found it on the same train Sundqvist took before he wound up with a bullet in his skull."

Holst exhaled through his nose. "Listen, Inspector, you're barking up the wrong tree. Sundqvist was no high roller. He was a middleman at best. If he had that kind of cash, it wasn't his."

Malmström leaned forward. "Then whose was it?"

Holst smiled, but his fingers tapped against his glass. "Maybe he was trying to pay off the wrong people."

Jonna noticed movement from the corner of her eye. A bartender, a young guy in a too-tight black shirt, slipped something onto the counter near her. A matchbook, its cover embossed with the name Hotel Kronan.

Jonna casually picked it up and slipped it into her coat. Malmström saw it too. That was their next lead.

Holst spread his hands. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I have a business to run."

Malmström stood, giving Holst a last hard look. "We'll be back."

Holst's smirk returned. "Looking forward to it."

* * * * *

Back in the car, Malmström examined the matchbook. "Hotel Kronan. Near Hässleholm station."

Jonna frowned. "Why would a bartender give us a lead?"

Malmström started the engine. "Because someone in that club knows they're next."

As they pulled away, the rain hammered the windshield harder. The night was far from over.

* * * * *

1:12 A.M.

Malmström locked up his office, rubbing the exhaustion from his face. The corridors of the station were mostly empty, just a few night-shift officers milling about. He stepped outside, the air crisp with the scent of wet asphalt.

That's when he saw it.

A black Volvo, tinted windows, rolling slowly past the station. The hairs on the back of his neck stood up.

Then... a flash. A suppressed gunshot.

Glass shattered. Malmström instinctively dropped behind a parked car, adrenaline surging through his veins.

The Volvo's tires screeched as it sped away into the night.

Malmström got up slowly, brushing shattered wing mirror glass off his coat. He exhaled, steadying himself.

Jonna ran out, gun drawn. "What the hell happened?"

Malmström lit a cigarette with calm precision. "Looks like we're on the right track."



The last move

The wind howled through the Hässleholm train depot, rattling loose sheets of metal and carrying the scent of diesel and wet iron. The tracks stretched into the darkness, lined with rusting freight cars and empty passenger trains waiting for morning.

Chief Inspector Henrik Malmström and Jonna Eriksson stood by the entrance, eyes scanning the shadows. Somewhere in this maze of steel and silence, Lars Edqvist was making his final move.

Malmström flexed his fingers inside his coat pocket, feeling the cold steel of his revolver. "He won't have anywhere to go," he muttered. "Trains don't run at this hour."

Jonna tightened her grip on her flashlight. “Unless he’s not planning to get on a train,” she said, scanning the stacked shipping containers ahead. “Maybe he’s waiting for someone.”

Malmström exhaled, watching his breath coil in the cold air. Edqvist wasn’t just a banker. He was the silent financier behind Holst’s gambling ring, laundering dirty money through the club. When Sundqvist stole a suitcase full of cash stained in blood, it set off a chain reaction, one that ended with a bullet in the back of Sundqvist’s head.

Now, Edqvist was running out of options.

A distant clang of metal echoed through the yard. Jonna snapped her flashlight in the direction of the noise.

Malmström whispered, “That was close.”

They moved between the freight cars, careful with each step. A faint click sounded ahead, too subtle for an ordinary worker.

A gun being cocked.

Malmström’s instincts flared. “Down!”

A shot rang out, splintering the wooden crate beside him. Jonna dropped into cover, yanking out her pistol. Another shot, whistling past.

Malmström took a breath, then moved. Fast.

He flanked the container's edge, gun raised. The silhouette of Lars Edqvist appeared under the dim floodlights, his suit damp and wrinkled, his hand shaking around a pistol.

"Drop it, Lars," Malmström ordered, his voice steady. "This game's over."

Edqvist's eyes darted, calculating, panicked. "I didn't pull the trigger on Sundqvist," he said, voice tight. "It was Holst's man. I just..." He hesitated. "I just wanted my money back."

"Then you should've gone to the bank," Malmström said coldly. "Instead, you're out here with a gun, looking like a man with no choices left."

Edqvist exhaled sharply, taking a step backward, toward the train tracks.

Jonna moved to cut him off. "Don't do it."

A distant horn blared, a freight train, approaching slowly, the heavy wheels grinding against steel.

Edqvist glanced at it. His face twisted. A decision made.

He turned, lunging for the train.

Malmström moved instantly, reaching for him, grabbing his coat... The fabric tore.

For a brief moment, Edqvist stumbled on the edge of the platform, arms flailing. His pistol clattered onto the gravel.

Then the train's brakes shrieked.

Malmström could only watch as Edqvist disappeared beneath the grinding wheels.

A sickening, final crunch.

The train slowed, its massive bulk hissing to a stop. Silence followed, thick, heavy, absolute.

Jonna stared at the spot where Edqvist had been. "Damn."

Malmström let out a slow breath, his hands still

clenched. He turned away, shaking his head. No words.

The bloodstained suitcase, the money, the execution of a desperate man, all of it ended here.

As dawn broke over Malmö, Malmström lit a cigarette, watching the first streaks of grey light cut through the night.

The case was closed.

But the city never sleeps.



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Thanos Kalamidas, a multipublished writer, cartoonist and illustrator; born and grew up in a picturesque neighbourhood on the mountainside of Hymettus in Athens, Greece. Then his life took him to Berlin, Germany and to London, UK for studies. After a brief stay in Yorkshire he moved his life to Paris,

France while working in Tokyo, Japan and in Cape Town, South Africa. In the last 25 years he became a permanent Scandinavian resident and recently, in his glorious sixth decade, he moved to a scenic village in the Våxjö area.

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